**A Time to Remember**

I expect we’ve all had that experience when you go upstairs to get something or do something and by the time you’ve got there you have forgotten what it was. *Short term memory loss -*a feature of advancing years for most of us. Yet we can remember as clear as day what we did 50 years ago or longer. The human brain has an amazing capacity for memories - we can never fill it, as was often the case with early computers. 25 years ago my first desktop computer had just 20Mb and I literally had to make space by deleting files. So some selection was necessary to preserve what was important.

When we were preparing to move up to Wirksworth I spent some considerable time sorting through old photos (printed ones - remember those?) and getting rid of what I didn’t need to keep. I seem to like taking photos of scenery, buildings, railways and, sometimes people. I always used to have to take a photo of Lesley on holiday to prove to her mother that I went with someone!What was interesting in this process of sorting out was how much I valued photos of people, when they were younger and especially of those who are no longer with us. It was good to hold on to those memories.

Another thing I have noticed as the years go by, as I have moved home and jobs and left old situations behind is that time is a great healer, for with the passage of time I seem to be able to hold on to the *good* memories, whilst the not so good fades away.Consequently those that would have once caused me great angst are not so important after all. Perhaps this is looking at the past through rose tinted glasses.

And in my role as minister, coming alongside people nearing the end of their earthly lives and supporting those close to them I am conscious of the distress this can generate, yet how it is always the case that when the moment comes and they are remembered, it is the life of their loved one and all the good things that will be shared and celebrated. Favourite sayings and habits, places and pastimes; the depth of love and the strength of relationships known and shared. Memories are made of this… so sang Dean Martin (in 1955) -*you* might remember, it’s before my time …but I do remember this being used for a Kodak advert in the 1970s!

Of course there were no cameras or computer equipment in Bible times yet the same principle seemed to apply - people were often called upon to remember the significant moments of their past journey with God and apply this to the situations they faced, however challenging. To be thankful for the good things of the past and then acknowledge God’s constant presence with us in the *known* present and the *uncertain* future can be a source of great comfort.

When people in the earliest church needed encouragement the writer of the letter to the Hebrews says remember what God once said *‘I will never leave you or forsake you’ (Hebrews 13:5*) and in these words recalls the divine words heard many generations earlier as they faced uncertainty but were about to enter a place and time of fulfilment. Perhaps these words resonate with us today…